JACK AND THE GYPSIES

WESLEYAN SUNDAY SCHOOL,

MILTON.

PRIZE

awarded to

Laura Wilkinson.

for Regular and Punctual

Attendance during

1926.

E. Barnett, *Secretary.*

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"HERE, HAND THAT KNIFE OVER TO ME."

JACK AND THE GYPSIES

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BLACKIE AND SON LIMITED

JACK AND THE GYPSIES

BY

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Jack and the Gypsies

IT was a lovely summer evening, and a merry group were assembled on the trim, well-kept lawn of the manor-house—a picturesque old red brick mansion, weird and quaintly gabled, which had been so pulled down and rebuilt by each succeeding generation that it would have puzzled the wisest head to have guessed its original shape.

Under the wide-spreading branch of an old cedar-tree a pale, delicate lady was leaning back in an easy-chair, watching with a bright smile the happy young faces gathered around.

"What should we do without this dear old tree, mama?" said a pretty, gentle girl of fourteen as she bent fondly over the invalid and drew her shawl closer around her.

"I am glad you like to have me once more with you, Queenie," replied Mrs. Vivian with a loving smile; "for, my dear child, you cannot enjoy these pleasant evenings more than I do. And indeed I think we all like them."

"I am sure we do," sang out a chorus of happy voices.

"But indeed, girls," said a tall, handsome boy, Mrs. Vivian's eldest son, "none of you can tell what it is to be from home, in some horrid, dirty hotel on the Continent, with nothing fit to eat, and the people around you gabbling some stupid language you can't understand, and perhaps a smell of garlic and oil enough to make one sick, and everything dirty and uncomfortable. Ah! wouldn't you wish yourselves back again here! I'm sure, from the day papa and I left England until we returned I did nothing but think how jolly you all were, and long to be home again. And then the pater would say: 'Now, Guy, wouldn't you give something to see your mother? Depend upon it, if the weather is fine she is in her old place under the cedar—Mob and Queenie with her, reading or working, and Bertie—'"

"Ah, yes! what was I doing?" exclaimed a

rosy-cheeked little fellow, springing up from the grass where he had been lying. "What did papa say of me?"

"Why, of course the usual thing," replied his brother laughingly — "getting into mischief or some scrape or other."

"Pulling Mob's curls," said Queenie; "or drowning her dolly in the water-butt; or putting a live mouse into nurse's stocking"—"Oh, didn't she scream!" cried Mob — "or cutting off Cousin Alice's pigtail."

"Ah! but I didn't think the mouse was alive," replied Bertie apologetically; "and if I did cut Alice's pigtail it was only because she thought it so long and red, and that, if cut off, it might grow a prettier colour. And I know I tried to be good while papa was away—didn't I, mama? And I am so sorry now about Alice's hair!"

"Oh! never mind that," said his cousin good-naturedly. "I asked you to cut it off; and I am sure I don't mind the colour one bit. And Guy, you do not know how good and kind Bertie was to me when I was ill. He would sit for hours beside me reading or inventing pretty stories to amuse me—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Guy, "that's too good! Bertie invent stories! Why, how clever he must be!"

"And they were such pretty ones!" continued Alice, "all about everything; and they seemed quite true, did they not, auntie?" and she turned appealingly to Mrs. Vivian.

"Bertie tried to amuse you, my dear," was the reply; "and I am sure he succeeded. And I know, Guy, he tried to be obedient and good, and a comfort to me in your father's absence."

Here Bertie's face flushed with delight at his mother's kindly words of praise, and his hand stole lovingly into hers, while he inwardly resolved from that moment he would give up teasing his sisters or cousin and playing tricks on nurse.

"But, mater dear," said Guy, "you do surprise us. The idea of Bertie making up a story!"

"Or mama writing one," replied his mother. "A real story, too—no nonsense like mine—"

"Mama! the mater!"—and for once in his life Bertie felt himself of importance—"do let us read it."

"Well, my dear children," said Mrs. Vivian, "it was only an incident that happened to me

when I was very young—about Mob's age, I should think; and as I copied it from my childish diary I thought that some day it might interest my children and show them the evil effects of disobedience, and the suffering and sorrow one foolish act of mine brought upon those very dear to me. Bertie knows where the manuscript is kept, and I am sure he will get it."

And with the promise of a clasp-knife from Guy and some toffy from Mob, if he made haste to bring it, he soon returned, waving the manuscript aloft and giving it to his brother, who quickly untied the blue ribbon that bound the closely-written pages and began to read in a clear, well-modulated voice:—

MAMA'S STORY.

It had been such a lovely morning, and I had worked so hard at my lessons, hoping to go out in the afternoon; and now it was raining as if it had never rained before, and was determined not to leave off in a hurry.

Drip, drip! splash, splash! Could it not stop for a few moments? It was so stupid watching the puddles it was making as it came down, and

the glistening of the rain-drops on the laurel and holly-leaves that shaded the wet winding path.

If Jack would but come! But just because I wanted him he was amusing himself far away. If I could but see him! And in a cross and disconsolate mood I leant as far as I could out of the school-room window and glanced anxiously around; but no Jack was to be seen. So thoroughly disheartened I turned away, and sitting down by the ink-stained, well-chipped table, where from my earliest recollections I had learnt my lessons and written my copies, I opened my Grammaire des Grammaires and set to work to prepare the exercise that Miss Meek, my governess, had left me to write.

Drip, drip! splash, splash! How it pours! Where is Jack? How tired I feel! Not even a good yawn can brighten me up. But I must begin: "Je fais mon devoir. Faites le votre." Very good advice, but I feel too weary to care for it. Somehow the pen slips from my fingers, I give a longer, wider yawn, and then fold my arms comfortably upon my book and commence to think.

How shabby and dingy the old room appears,

and yet how familiar and dear to me everything in it seems, and how quickly my memory goes back to the first time I saw it!

What a mite I was! What a poor little lonely old-fashioned creature! "Weirdie-like," I remember nurse calling me, and "weirdie" I must have been. How often I had wished to be bright and happy like Jack! But perhaps I had better go on with my exercise.

"Everything she does she does well."

"Tout ce qu'elle fait, elle le fait bien."

How I wish papa, or Miss Meek, or dear, sweet Auntie May—"May blossom" I call her—would say the same of me!

I know I try hard to please them, but never seem to succeed. Auntie never says anything when Miss Meek complains but, "Little woman, try again — you will do better, dear, another time;" and when Miss Meek calls me idle or stupid to papa, and too fond of play—of course she means with Jack; I have no one else to play with—and that I do her no credit, papa only shakes his head and says: "Dear me! It's very sad, Miss Meek—very sad. Daisy, my child, you must try to improve." And then he goes back

to his study and shuts himself up with his sermons and encyclopædia. I know I've spelt that word aright, for Miss Limpet, my last governess, made me write it out one hundred times, as an imposition, as Jack calls it, for not knowing how to spell it correctly.

Papa's encyclopædia is a sort of dictionary about everything. He says when published it will make his name famous; but he has been years and years writing it, and has only got to the letter E—so I don't expect it will be finished until I am quite an old woman. I don't know the age he will be then, but I suppose people are old and gray at forty. I am only fifteen now, and twenty-five years seems such a long long time to look forward to; but now, when I come to think of it, Auntie May-blossom is just thirty. I remember her telling me she was. And she is so young and pretty, with such a sweet, happy face, one could never imagine her even in years to come looking different; and how good she has always been to me, and how glad Jack and I are when we hear she is coming—even Miss Meek is not so cross, nor finds so many faults with me.

Auntie always seems to be like what my own

dear mama must have been. I wish I could remember her more. It makes me feel so sad when I see other children with their mothers, and to think that I never knew mine. She died when I was a baby; and auntie tells me it is grief for her death that makes papa's hair so white, and brought that sad look into his eyes.

She died in such a pretty place—a vicarage they call it—in the north of England. Papa then was curate to her father, my grandpapa, and he fretted so much after her death, and took such a dislike to the place, grandpapa got him this living, and we came here, auntie, then a girl of seventeen, old nurse, and poor little me; and then one day papa got a letter from an old friend in India, telling him his regiment was ordered where some fighting was going on, and would he take charge of his eldest boy, and educate him to be a soldier like himself, and that is how we knew Jack. That was not his real name, but I had just lost a dear little puppy called Jack, and I loved the name so much I asked him would he mind my calling him by it, and he laughed and said: "I might call him anything I liked."

But I really must go on with my exercise, and

not indulge in what Miss Limpet termed "a reverie."

Oh, how fast it is raining, and how dark the sky looks, and what heavy clouds come sweeping up!

I wonder where Jack can be? It is unkind of him having me here and not coming to help me with this horrid exercise.

Papa does not teach him now. He said his method was too old-fashioned for the present style of army examinations—"exams," Jack calls them—and he has a tutor for him, Mr. Straight, such a dear kind old man, even Miss Meek likes him, and he has often helped me in my lessons, and somehow he makes me understand what I have to learn so much better than Miss Meek, and then, of course, the lessons seem so much easier, and I can remember them more.

There, now, I've upset the ink. Well, it cannot harm the table, and if it had fallen on the carpet it could not spoil that; and there is no more ink, none at least that I can get at, so it's no good trying to go on with the exercise, and once more I fold my arms on my book and glance moodily around.

What a bare dingy room it is!

The one solitary strip of carpet is so faded one can hardly guess its original colour, and burnt into so many holes from Jack popping into my hands at meal-times red-hot chestnuts which he knew Miss Meek considered too indigestible to allow me to eat, and which I could drop quickly and let smoulder on the floor. And what horrid tell-tale things they are! And I always notice in the winter the crosser Miss Meek is the more chestnuts he brings and the more holes are in the carpet.

Then I look at the old table, how splashed with ink, how notched and cut.

The room was used as a school-room before we came, and certainly Jack has not improved it by carving our names and upsetting the ink upon it. I don't think Miss Meek ever gave him anything to write, "just to keep him quiet," as she said, that he would not turn over the inkstand and then take his pocket-handkerchief to wipe it up.

And there is the old book-case; of course every bit of glass in it is broken, and the ragged red calico that lined it flaps drearily to and fro. What a number of dog-eared, well-thumbed books are

piled dusty and untidy on its shelves. I remember, when Miss Limpet was my governess, Jack and I hiding away behind them a cage of white mice, and every day when my lessons began she would say:

"Dear me, what a smell of mice! it is very unpleasant. I wish, Daisy, you would keep a cat, or set a trap."

And Jack would calmly answer:

"Old houses are generally overrun with mice, and the kitten is too young yet to catch them, but when older I'm sure she will be a good mouser, and soon clear the place of them. Mice are disagreeable things to have about you."

And then Miss Limpet would blink her eyes, and look first at one of us and then at the other to see Jack was not playing some trick upon her; but his grave face and the quiet tone of his voice would disarm suspicion. And so the lessons would go on, and day by day our little pets grew and flourished behind the old books.

Of course it was very wrong of us to deceive her, but Miss Limpet disliked animals of all kinds, and would make no allowance for our childish pets, or our affection for them.

Jack always mistrusted her, and I must confess I never cared for her. She had a cold gray eye, a long face, and straw-coloured hair, twisted in what she called a "classical coil" at the back of her head.

I am sure she was not of an amiable disposition, for I never remember any animal or child evincing the least affection for her; and children and animals soon know who likes them and are friends with them, and who are not.

Jack and I were so glad when she left and Miss Meek came!

"Meek," as Jack says, "by name, but not by nature." She is a tall bony woman, with hard features, and sharp eyes, very like a ferret's, which notice everything, although she wears spectacles and pretends she can't see without them; but I know better, for she saw Jack spelling on his fingers a word I could not write correctly fast enough.

Jack only tried to help me because I was so tired. Miss Meek makes me be down-stairs by seven o'clock each morning, then practise an hour, and it is lessons, lessons, with her all day until my head aches so, and the room seems

going round and round, and I hear buzzing, buz, buz, like bees, in my ears, and feel so weary, and long so for Auntie May to be near me; but she is married, and lives in Scotland, and, of course, cannot come so often to see us, and Miss Meek will not allow me to go and stay with her, as she wishes, because, as she tells papa, it would unsettle me and make me more than ever disinclined for study. And my dear old nurse has gone; Miss Meek said I was too old to need her. And papa thinks only of his encyclopædia. And I have no one to talk to but Jack, kind good Jack!

"Hallo! Why, Daisy asleep! Where's old Meek?"

"Oh, Jack, how you frightened me! How glad I am you have come; and what a fine afternoon it has turned out—all the rain gone, and the sky is blue overhead, and how warm and lovely it seems! Oh, how I wish I could go out!" and I lean my arms upon the window-sill and look wistfully at him.

"Why can't you?"

"I've not finished my French exercise. I felt too tired, and my head ached, and I upset the ink, and—"

"I know, Daisy, you've been in one of your thoughtful, lazy moods.

"Oh, Daisy, Daisy, pale and weak,
Won't you catch it from Miss Meek."

"Hush, Jack!" I cried in terror, for his continued rhymes on her name kept me always in a state of fear and trembling lest she should hear them. "You must not sing such nonsense." But Jack, with a merry laugh, only sang the louder:—

"Isn't she an awful sneak!"

"Oh, Jack, what an ungentlemanly word!" I exclaimed severely.

"But she is, Daisy, for I am sure she listens at the doors, and tells tales behind your back, and if that is not being a sneak I don't know what is one."

"But, Jack, you are not sure she has done so."

"Ah! but I am sure of it, or how would she know what one is doing or saying, and give such horrid hints as she does. I hate anyone," he continued emphatically, "who does not come boldly into a room and look at you straight in

the face. She does neither, but comes sneaking, sneaking, so softly that you suddenly find her at your elbow when you are thinking, or hoping, more likely, she is a dozen miles away. And as to the word 'sneak,' depend on it, Daisy, it will be in your papa's encyclopædia. Oh, I say that will be his definition of the word. I shall suggest Miss Meek would give the best idea of what it was."

"But, Jack, papa is not writing a common encyclopædia;" and from being able to spell the word I gave it due emphasis. "His book is to be all about science and art, and I don't know what, and when it is published it will make his name famous."

"When!" and Jack laughed. "But *when* will that *when* be?"

"Never mind," said I, nettled at his incredulous tone; "perhaps some day when you least expect it."

"Now, Daisy, I sha'n't stay here to argue that point. I'm off. Are you coming?"

"I cannot, Jack," I answered sorrowfully. "How I wish I had written that exercise and practised my scales, for I now remember Miss

Meek said I was to run them up and down for an hour, and then do some sums."

"Oh, I say, doesn't she grind you! Well, then, I'm off, for I see you will not get through all that until bed-time. But wait a minute. I forgot to tell you Tom Smith has brought you a little white rabbit, such a beauty, with pretty dark eyes, and the fluffiest bit of a tail."

"Oh, Jack, where is it?"

"Why, in the barn, in the old hutch, and I've given it lots of dandelion leaves."

"Oh, Jack!" I exclaimed excitedly; "how I should like to see it!"

"Well, then, come!"

But I shook my head. "I know Miss Meek will say I am idle and disobedient, and I must not vex her more."

"What a lovely afternoon it has turned out! I think I'll give the pigeons a fly and then take Nip and Grim to the pond for a swim. Good-bye!" and with his hands in his pockets, and whistling loudly, Jack turned away.

I could not help it. The rabbit, the pigeons, the dogs in the cool water under the willows rose before me. I felt how much I had missed, and,

leaning my head on the window-sill, buried my face in my hands, and burst into tears.

"Why, Daisy, you goose!" It was Jack's cheerful voice, and his kind face peeping up at me, that aroused me and made me feel how stupid I was to give way in such a childish manner. "Oh, please, don't look at me," I pleaded. "I will go and practise, and will soon be all right." And I tried to steady my voice and swallow down an obstinate sob.

But swinging himself lightly up on the old thorn that grew near he perched himself upon the window-sill and looked at me earnestly.

"You look awfully ill," he said at last. "Your face is as white as your—" pocket-handkerchief, he would have added, but, catching sight of the one with which I had mopped up the ink I had upset, he paused for a moment, disconcerted, and then continued, "I just wish Mr. Thornton or Auntie May could see you. I'm sure they wouldn't allow old Meek to worry you so with lessons. Why, it's worse than nigger-driving. I do believe, Daisy, you'll die if you go on like this. Why, old Straight coaching a fellow for the exams doesn't drive him harder."

"Oh, do stop, Jack," I cried, "I cannot bear it!"

"Shouldn't say you could, nor anyone else; but really—no nonsense now—I wonder you don't bolt."

"What!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you know, run away! What a lark it would be for old Meek to come down some fine morning and find no one here, and you on your road to your auntie's in Edinburgh!"

"Jack!" said I, rebukingly. "It's very well for *boys* to talk such rubbish; but you know I should never dream of doing anything so foolish and wicked."

"Boys!—I like that!"—was the contemptuous reply. "Pray, how old are you?"

"I was fifteen last May," I rejoined with dignity, "as you may remember, unless your memory is failing."

"And I was fifteen last February. Come, now—nearly three months older than you."

But I had slipped down from the chair I was perched upon and placed myself before the wretched cracked piano, with its yellow keys, on

which for so many years I had strummed daily, and began to run up my scales.

"Daisy."

No answer. But the loud pedal worked vigorously.

"Daisy, I say, don't be offended or sulk with a fellow. I've something particular to tell you."

"What is it?" I replied at last, curiosity getting the better of my temper, and once more approaching the window.

"Do you remember the day I first came here?"

"Yes," I replied, looking at the honest blue eyes and handsome boyish face. "You came here eight years ago. How well, wee mite as I was, I recollect it!"

"And we've always been good friends, and you've always said I was like a brother to you; and you've been just like Lucy and Blanche, my little Indian sisters, to me—there, I don't mean any chaff, so you needn't look at me so nasty. And now, just when a fellow tries to please you, you get disagreeable, and want to quarrel with him. It's mean of you."

"No, Jack, indeed I don't."

"And I got the rabbit for you"—this was said

in the most aggrieved tone—"and wouldn't go into the stable-yard to feed the pigeons or give the dogs a swim."

"Oh, Jack!" I cried, thoroughly repentant, and with my heart softened by such self-denial on his part. "I didn't mean to be cross, and I'm sure I had no intention of quarrelling."

"Perhaps you are tired of me, and would prefer Eliza James and her sister." This was said loftily; but it was the unkindest cut of all, and I could hardly restrain my tears.

Eliza James and her sister Sarah were the doctor's daughters, and lived in the big white house at the end of the village; and Miss Meek at one time suggested to papa that if left with Jack as my only companion I should become a Tom-boy, and thus bring discredit on her tuition, and that it would be better that I should have for the future the friendship and society not of a "boy," but of young ladies, and young ladies who were her especial admiration, and models of refinement, education, and good manners. At her request, therefore, the Misses James were invited to the Vicarage.

How I dreaded their coming! for whenever I

had met them they had always looked at me with disdain and turned up their noses in a manner that neither Jack nor I thought kind, much less ladylike.

At last they arrived, all frills, flounces, bows, sashes, frizzed hair, and everything calculated to impress me with an idea of their importance and fashionable appearance.

Never shall I forget their disgust and the contempt with which they contemplated me; and certainly I was not, I own, very presentable, nor, for that matter, was Jack either. I had been riding the pony without saddle or bridle, Jack running after me, and making him trot his fastest round the stable-yard and through the meadows; and now with my rough and untidy hair hanging down my back, a dilapidated old straw-hat in my hand, and my dress not improved in the way of cleanliness, I presented a striking contrast to the careful toilettes of my visitors.

Miss Eliza was the first to break the silence by exclaiming, as she scornfully eyed me:

"What do you think of our new frocks and our sashes? Are they not lovely? And they're quite new, too."

"I think they are very pretty," I replied, while Jack made a wry face.

"And what do you think nurse said?" began Miss Sarah. "I asked her if she thought you were pretty, and she said, oh no! you were very ugly."

"And mama said you looked a very stupid girl, and as old-fashioned as your frocks; indeed, she called you a dowdy fright," politely interposed her sister.

"And what did your mama kindly say of me?" inquired Jack, while tears of mortification gathered in my eyes, for what girl likes to be called "ugly, dowdy, and old-fashioned?"

"Oh! she thinks you are a great, rude, lubberly boy," was the candid reply. "And you ought to be at a good school, and not with that stupid old Mr. Straight, learning nothing, and running about all the day, an idle— "

But Jack would listen to nothing more.

"Pray tell your mama," he exclaimed, waxing wroth, "Daisy and I are very much obliged to her for her good opinion of us. Anyone with a grain of sense"—here he laughed contemptuously —"would prefer a girl unaffected and simple, as she should be, to pert, ill-natured, dressed-up

dolls"—this last was said with withering scorn. "And I am sure Daisy's dress is far prettier and more ladylike."

"Oh, but, Jack," I interrupted ruefully, "it's so torn and muddy from going over the brook in the meadow!"

"Never mind, Daisy," he replied, in so cheery and brave a tone I could but feel thankful to him. "It's a girl's frock, not a caricature out of a fashion-book; and there's one comfort, you are not spiteful, and fond of repeating ill-natured things—you are too gentle and amiable for that. And as to Mrs. James's opinion of me, I'm much obliged to her for it, but time will show how true it is." And so Jack walked away, and left me to bear the brunt of Miss Eliza and Sarah's disagreeable tempers for the remainder of the day.

What a day it was! shall I ever forget it? Oh how long and miserable it seemed! Far from "dear"-ing and "my darling" each other, they became quite spiteful and contradicted flatly, and at last quarrelled. And Miss Eliza slapped Miss Sarah's face, and Miss Sarah pinched her sister until she cried, and then Miss Meek had to interfere, and was at last obliged to take them home;

and never was I more thankful than when I saw them depart out of the gates of the Vicarage, and heard Miss Meek say:

"You have both behaved shamefully, and so unlike young ladies I cannot ask you here again, or have so bad an example set to Miss Thornton. I'm perfectly shocked at your conduct!" And shocked, I suppose, she must have been, for it was the last time the "companionship of young ladies" was suggested to papa or myself; nor did she ever again complain of my need of it.

"Well," said Jack at last, during which time with his pocket-knife he had been trying hard to cut his name on the time-worn window-sill, "do you want those Jameses or me, for you've been a precious long time making up your mind."

"You know, Jack," I replied dolefully, "I like you the best. I do not care for those girls."

"Then come out. Let's go down to the farm and see the cows milked. I'm awfully thirsty, and should like some fresh milk; shouldn't you?"

"Of course!" I answered, feeling more miserable than I could express. To see the cows milked, and have a scamper through the meadows, or go into the orchard and have some lovely plums or

delicious pears was an idea too delightful, a temptation hardly to be resisted.

"Oh, I must not!" I said at last. "Miss Meek will not let me, and you know how cross she gets, and complains to papa."

"You have no spirit, Daisy, not a bit of it."

"Yes I have, Jack," I said, looking up at the blue sky, and then wistfully beyond the thickets of rhododendron, holly, and laurels to where the green fields, with the soft cool grass, and the dear old orchard with its fruit-laden, wide-spreading trees all aglow in the warm sunshine of the August sun lay stretched before me. What a contrast they seemed in their golden splendour and quiet beauty to the dreary loneliness, the stuffiness, despite the open window, of the school-room in which I had been penned, with throbbing head and wearied brain, since early morning! "Oh! Jack if I could but go—"

"Faint of heart, and pale of cheek,
Daisy, you're afraid to speak,
Won't you catch it from that sneak,
That old creature (she's an old cat) Martha Meek.
Ma-ar-tha Meek
Is—a—s-n-e-a-k—
Is a—"

"Miss Thornton, will you oblige me by closing the window and coming here," said a voice behind me. Quickly I turned, and saw, to my dismay, Miss Meek—her face pale with rage, her gray eyes positively glaring at me through her spectacles.

"As to you," and she waved her hand toward Jack, "be pleased to leave this instant. Be assured you shall answer for your impertinence towards me, and the spirit of disobedience you are inculcating in my pupil."

But at the first sound of her voice Jack had leaped down, and was already disappearing round the corner as fast as his legs could take him, while from the stable-yard—how quickly he must have got there—I could hear:

"Daisy, Daisy, faint and weak" in the loudest tone, with a prolonged

"S-n-e-a-k."

While I endeavoured to close the window, which, as the sash-lines were broken, and sundry artifices employed to keep it open, took some little time, Miss Meek recommenced:

"Where is your exercise?"

"Oh! Miss Meek," I began timidly.

"Show me your exercise."

"I have not written it. I had such a headache," I pleaded. "I am so sorry. I will do it at once. Oh! Miss Meek," I continued, bursting into tears. "I am so sorry, do forgive me. I will try and work hard to please you, only I was so tired, so very tired!" And hardly knowing what I was doing I sank into a chair, and leaning my face against it sobbed bitterly.

To this day I cannot recollect or recall the scene that followed.

Miss Meek, losing control over her temper, called me "ungrateful," "stupid," "ill-tempered," "deceitful;" and then deplored her care, her unceasing labours for the advancement of my education had been thrown away. She had been insulted, and would leave the house at once; she could not stay longer with such people, or instruct a pupil who was indifferent to the continual sacrifices of *her* health and talents that she was making. Ah! well, it served her rightly, coming to a house where she was so completely unappreciated.

What the sacrifices were I cannot to this day understand, as she always seemed to rule papa,

and to have everything her own way—indeed strangers had taken her very often for the mistress of the house.

"But she would not remain longer with such ill-bred wicked children, and so foolish and weak-minded a person as Mr. Thornton."

"Stop, Miss Meek," I cried, springing to my feet, and white and trembling standing before her; for it made me throw respect, obedience, all I owed her, to the winds, and feel almost beside myself, to hear my own darling papa spoken of in so unjust, so cruel a manner.

"How can you say anything so wicked, so untrue of my papa? He is so good, so gentle, so loving, and so clever too; and as for Jack, I know he was rude to you, but he will apologize and be sorry for it. And you know," I continued with a burst of tears, "how often you have told papa and Mr. Straight he was a fine, high-spirited. kind-hearted boy, a generous lad—'a fine character,' you have called him; one sure to get on and make friends wherever he goes; and as to my papa being weak-minded, oh, Miss Meek, how could you say anything so cruel?"

"I don't care what I have said," and her voice

shook with passion. "But I know what I shall do, Daisy Thornton."

"Oh! tell me, Miss Meek," I cried in desperation. "What will you do?"

"I shall go at once, miss, to your father and acquaint him with your conduct and that boy's insolence, and insist—do you hear me? insist—either he or I shall leave the house. Not another night will I sleep under this roof if such a daring audacious creature remains here. I do not think he would like to part with *me*." This was said emphatically. "And that young monkey shall see who is master. Sneak indeed!"

"Do not go. Oh! please, Miss Meek!" I sobbed for the hard expression of her face and her determined tone filled me with dismay.

Jack turned out of the house in disgrace, papa angry with him! What would home be without my only companion—my only playmate?

Never under any circumstances had I contemplated such an event. And how would he bear it? How endure such a hard punishment for the boyish freak of a moment?

Oh, I must ask her to forgive him, and pre-

vent her in her present angry mood from speaking to papa! Surely when her temper has passed away, and she knows how sorry, how repentant Jack is, and how anxious and earnest we both will be to show her in the future how sorry we were to have annoyed her, and how hard we will try to please her, so as to give her no further cause of complaint, she will forgive us, and not tell papa, or wish for Jack to go away.

But while these thoughts rushed across my mind she was already by the door, and I saw by her determined face little mercy could be expected, and no pleading of mine would alter her decision. She would carry her wrongs to papa, and Jack be the sufferer.

"Oh! Miss Meek," I cried imploringly, clinging to her and grasping her dress in my frantic endeavour to detain her, "punish me as you like, but spare Jack; do not make papa vexed with him. He never intended to annoy you, do forgive him. Only this time," and I sank sobbing on my knees before her.

"All that you can say only proves his deceit, his insolence, and your wicked nature in encouraging him. I shall go at once to Mr. Thorn-

ton, for I am resolved that either that boy or I leave this house."

"No, no!" I exclaimed as once more I clung to her. "Do not be so cruel. Try Jack again—do not let him be sent away. Oh, Miss Meek, have pity—do forgive him, only this once." And in my misery and despair I caught her hand and held it tightly; but in a moment she had wrenched it from my grasp, pushed me from her, and I fell backwards, striking, as I did so, my head against a sharp corner of the table.

There was a dull pain, a singing in my ears, a sound of a door closing behind me, then all seemed to grow dark around me, and sinking on the floor I lost consciousness.

How long I remained so I cannot tell, but I was aroused by feeling a little soft nose thrust into my hand and a loud purring close to me; then a little rough tongue licking my face, and finally a ball of soft fur nestling under my chin, and rubbing itself against my cheek, and on opening my eyes I found my pretty white kitten had jumped from the bed I had made her in the old book-case upon my garden jacket, and like a faithful friend in its own affectionate

way was trying to show how it sympathized with me.

"Snowy, my darling," I cried, clasping her in my arms, "my wee pretty one! You will not be cruel and unkind, and want Jack to go away." But as the remembrance of what had passed rose before me, and the thought that by this time Miss Meek must have seen papa and told him of her grievance, I could only bury my face in her soft silky coat, and sob as if my heart would break.

Then, hugging her to me, I rose to my feet, and sick and dizzy, with the room spinning around me, I groped my way to the nearest chair, and sinking into it, once more hid my face in her soft fur.

How unhappy and miserable I felt! "Oh! mama," I moaned, "if you were only here; and auntie, dear auntie! come back to us and save Jack!" and in my wretchedness I stretched out my hands, and covering my face, wept bitterly, forgetful of Snowy, who, jumping down, hid herself under the table, thinking, poor little pet, I was having a game of play with her.

Alas! in that hour of sore distress I did not think of the one true Friend to whom I could have

carried my sorrow, feeling assured his love, his unfailing sympathy, would be mine, and that his piercing eye could see, his tender heart feel, for me.

It is true, I regularly attended church, listened to papa's sermons, and thought them impressive and beautiful. I said my prayers night and morning, and besought the Almighty's blessing on those dear to me. I read daily to Miss Meek a psalm or chapter, and then put away the Bible until the next day; and on Sunday I learnt the collect, read the epistle and gospel to her, and also read some "good book" of her choosing, and one generally so hard to understand, that I was glad to lay it aside; but yet my heart had not been touched nor had a thought of God's mercy and long-suffering entered it. But in his own gracious way he was bringing me nearer to him, and little did I think that the one act of disobedience in not writing the French exercise was to influence my future life, and with his blessing be the means appointed to lead me to him, and gratefully for the future to acknowledge that "his mercy endureth for ever."

But all this was hidden from my eyes as I sat

sobbing by myself, dreading every moment to hear the door open and see Miss Meek enter the room to tell me she had succeeded with papa,—that she was to remain, Jack to go.

"Oh Jack!" I cried, feeling too sorrowful to realize the idea. "What am I to do? How can I live when you are gone?"

"When I am gone! Well, that's a good idea!" and Jack, with a bright cheery face, rushed into the room, giving the door a kick and thus shutting it with a bang behind him, and then looking down upon me with a bright happy face and eyes brimful of mischief. "When I am gone! Why, Daisy, what do you mean?"

"Oh, Jack!" I exclaimed. But he took no notice, and went on:

"I say, what do you think? isn't it jolly? I've watched that old cat there now, Daisy, don't look so grave—that old s-n-e-a-k, Miss Meek"—this was said out loud and with a shout of laughter—'all down the lane; so she is out, and the dear old dad"—this was Jack's favourite word for papa—"and we're all alone, and you can come out now as soon as you like.

"But, my goodness! Goodness gracious me,

what is the matter, Daisy? Are you so angry because I bolted and didn't stay to listen to that old thing? Why, I did it because I feared the sight of me would make you catch it the more—but, Daisy, I say, stop that; don't go on so. Oh! I say; what is a fellow to do?"

"Oh, Jack!" I cried, sobbing as if my heart would break, "Miss Meek is determined you are to go away—sent I don't know where." And then, with broken words, and many sobs between, I told him of all that had happened.

Jack listened in silence, and seemed too surprised to speak; but he soon recovered himself and burst out in his usual impetuous manner:

"The old deceitful thing! And so she wants to set the dad against me and have me sent away! But I'll be even with her."

"Oh! please, Jack," I remonstrated, my tears breaking out afresh; "there has been enough trouble for one day. Please do not add to it; I cannot bear it."

"Nor shall you, Daisy; but listen to me—there, don't cry. What fellow can bear to see a girl's tears?" This was said loftily. "Now are you better?" And taking a very dirty ink-stained

handkerchief from his pocket he began to wipe, or I might say gently mop up my tears, patting me meanwhile on my back and doing his best to console me.

"There, now, you are better. Now can you listen to me?"

"Yes, Jack," I answered meekly.

"That old thing—"

"Oh Jack!"—

"That old thing,"—this was said in the most decided tone—"wanted to see the dad and kick up a row with him. That's as plain as—as the nose on your face. Well, she went to his study, but he was not there, and she found out from Mary he had gone out. So she has gone to look for him."

"But where is papa?" I cried eagerly, catching my breath, and swallowing down a sob that would, however, be heard.

"Gone over to Denham. A groom brought a note from old Mrs. Warner, saying she was worse, and must see him at once. I met him in the hall just as he was starting, and he told me where he was going, and said he should come home, if not too late, through the wood, and if we liked—

which of course we should only think too jolly—we were to go and meet him.

"Now, Daisy, and there's a chance for us. When we have him all to ourselves he will hear our story before Miss Meek can tell hers."

"Oh, Jack," I cried excitedly, "let us go at once! Oh, do not waste a minute!"

"Stop a bit; don't be in such a hurry. You must have something to eat first. Do you think you are fit for such a long walk with that white face?"

"But I'm not a bit hungry," I exclaimed.

"And you ate no dinner, I saw *that*," he continued calmly.

"But I want nothing to eat, dear Jack; let us go;" and I seized his hand in my impatience. "Let us start at once."

"Now look here, I'll not budge an inch," and he sat down on a chair in the most provoking manner and drew it opposite to me. "I'll *not* go unless you promise to remain here quietly until I come back."

"I promise, Jack," I murmured, for on attempting to walk I found myself more exhausted and faint than I would confess.

"You walk to Denham! Oh, Daisy, with that white face! Why, you have not the strength of a mouse, nor a midge either, for that matter. What a queer lot girls are! They never give in, though; they are a plucky lot, I do believe; but stay where you are. I sha'n't be a minute;" and with a happy laugh and encouraging nod he hurried away, only turning to give another look at me and send forth a loud whistle of defiance to the absent Miss Meek.

It was not long before he returned, his face beaming with delight, and whistling louder and more defiantly, and behind him came our good-natured old cook, her face a trifle redder than usual, but carrying a small tray with *something* upon it smelling, oh! so deliciously that it made me feel positively hungry. And at the back of her came Mary the housemaid, looking very indignant and greatly flustered.

"Oh, Miss Daisy!" she cried as she caught a glimpse of my white face and tearful eyes. "Oh, my dear young mistress!" and rushing up she clasped me in her arms, and bending over me, burst into tears; while I, feeling more than words could express her kind honest sympathy, nestled

closely to her, and laid my aching head upon her shoulder. "Oh, my darling young mistress!" she cried, "if this is not enough to break one's heart!"

"There, shut up, do!" said Jack; "what is the good of your going on so, and making her cry the more? Here, Daisy, look at what cook has brought you, and make haste and eat it."

"Oh, yes, sir," continued the impetuous Mary, with a toss of her head and clasping me tighter to her, "it's well to say 'eat,' but look at my poor young mistress, and all along of that Miss Meek. Meek, indeed! vinegar and crab-apples ain't nothing to her sour spiteful temper!"

"Hush, hush, Mary!" and I disengaged myself from her arms; "you must not talk like that," for her words made me more miserable than I could express. "Indeed, you must not speak in that way of Miss Meek; she does what she thinks is right, and it's all my fault;" and my tears flowed afresh.

"There, stop, Mary," said the cook sharply, as she placed the tray before me; "and now, miss, try and eat just a morsel," and as she spoke she whisked off the cover and displayed a tempting

hot buttered cake and a delicious-looking cup of tea.

"Oh, cook!" I cried gratefully, "how kind of you! How good you both are to me!" And needing no second bidding, morsel succeeded morsel, until the plate was cleared, the cup emptied, and with strength and spirits revived I felt only too eager to set off.

"Stop a bit, miss," and cook gently pushed me back into the chair from which I had risen. "Another cup of tea and a tiny bit of cake."

"Please, no more," I cried, not liking to vex her by refusing, yet feeling each moment passing was an opportunity lost. "I must not trouble you—" but seeing how clouded her usual good-tempered face became, and knowing she only pressed me in kindness, I added, "Well, just a cup of tea."

"Now, miss," and with a smile she hurried to the kitchen and soon returned with another cup of the refreshing beverage, "just drink it while it's hot, and if not taking too much of a liberty let me ask why didn't you, when you felt so ill, call or ring for Mary or me?"

"I don't know," I replied; "I never thought of it."

"Ah, miss!" and she shook her head, "there's a late dinner to-day, and a tough fowl is trying to one's feelings, which I won't deny, let alone ovens as won't heat and pastry that won't rise; but had I known you were so bad I would have come to you in a minute."

"Oh, never mind, cook; thank you, I am much better;" and once more I glanced eagerly towards the door.

"No, miss, excuse me, but it ain't all right, for if Master Jack had not come to us just as we were sitting down to our tea, with a bit of hot cake, which, miss, we were only too glad to let you have, what would have become of you? Why, you might have lain there until your pa came home."

"Really, cook," I answered, thinking how much nicer the tea in the kitchen must be with hot cake, and doubtless other dainties, to the hunks of bread and sparingly-spread butter and the cold sloppy stuff called tea Miss Meek gave us in the school-room.

"I must go or it will be dark before we start. Come, Jack."

"Just one minute, miss; and you, Master Jack,

I've a cup of tea for you, sir, and a bit of something to eat by the way;" and before I could speak the kind-hearted woman had hurried out of the room.

"I won't say no to anything good," cried Jack, "only be quick, there's a good old thing Oh, I say, Daisy, if old Meek could see us now!"

"Oh, don't, please!" I exclaimed, for the very idea was too terrible to be entertained. "Suppose she should come?"

"But she cannot unless she climbed up the old thorn and came in by the window, and then I should not let her in. Look here," and he took a huge key from his pocket, "I've locked the hall-door so she can't get in there; I've fastened up both the back-doors, and dear old dad's study, and as Jim was going to his tea I asked him to fasten up the gates of the stable-yard, so she can't get in;" and with a whoop and merry laugh he tossed his cap in the air and danced round and round the table.

"Lor', Master Jack!" said Mary admiringly, "what a light-hearted, cheerful young gentleman you be. No one could be dull or mopy where

you were; it's quite a pleasure to hear you sing and see you so lively."

Ah, Mary, listen to his laugh and watch his boyish face beaming with happy sunny smiles, nor dream of the dark shadow stealing up to cloud its brightness!

"Now, Mary, listen to me. Am I not a poet? This is the last new song of the day:—

> "Oh, dear, what a terrible shock!
> She can't come in till she gives a knock.
> Oh, dear, what a terrible thing!
> She must wait outside till she gives a ring."

"And she will, Jack, unless we start at once. Now, then, are you ready?" And gulping down the tea cook had brought me, and making him swallow his, I hastily put on my old garden jacket and hat that lay near, and giving Snowy with many kisses to the care of Mary, who promised she should have a saucer of milk in the kitchen, I hurried down the stairs, cook, very much out of breath, following me, and Mary and Jack in skirmishing order bringing up the rear.

"Now ha' done, Master Jack," I heard her cry

as he flourished her cap on the point of his stick over my head; "ha' done, sir, you're too big to carry on so," and as his merry peals of laughter made me turn round and remind him if so much noise was made we could not hear Miss Meek knocking at the door, Mary indignantly exclaimed:

"Well, miss, one would rather listen to that dear boy's happy laugh than to that old—" but catching my eye she added, "to your governess, miss. Lor', miss, it seems but yesterday I came here, a slip of a thing, to be under your nurse! What a quiet little mite you were, and how fond I was of you, and how happy we all were! There *was* no old Miss Meek in those days, and Master Jack was, just as now, 'the sunshine of the house;' everyone loved him and his bright merry ways, so let him laugh while he can. He'll go away some day, Miss Daisy, and then what will you do without him?"

"Oh, Mary," I cried, "do not ask me! let us go and find papa or Miss Meek will see him first, and then Jack will be sent away. Pray do not let her know where we are gone or she will follow us," and I wrung my hands in despair.

"Lor', Miss Daisy!" she exclaimed, "when I saw your white face I guessed it was something more than a headache. Why didn't you, miss, tell cook and I before? Master Jack sent away! Well, no names, miss, and no offence meant. There, go, my dear; do not waste another moment! We'll let you both through this door, then you can go through the shrubbery. Miss Meek never comes that way; there is the key of the orchard gate, lock it and push it underneath—I have to gather some plums there soon and I will look for it; and then hurry up the lane and you're sure to meet master coming through the wood from Denham. Oh, Miss Daisy, if I could but go with you!"

"Which you know, Mary, you can't do, having plums to stone and to help me in getting the jam made. But look here, miss," and cook produced from her capacious apron pocket a neatly-folded parcel, "it's only a bit of plum-cake I thought you might like to eat by the way. And now, my darling little mistress, good-bye. Take care of her, Master Jack. I shall be anxious enough for your return." But before she had finished speaking Jack had snatched the parcel from her,

stuffed it into his pocket, and catching hold of my hand we were tearing through the shrubbery as fast as we could run. How sweet the air seemed, how pure and refreshing, after the close stuffy school-room! and as the pleasant summer breeze swept by, my head grew lighter, my feet swifter.

And how lovely the dear old orchard looked in the warm bright sunshine with its flickering gleams of lights and shadows!

The grass so soft and cool to tread upon, the rich, tempting fruit hanging in ripe clusters on pear, apple, or plum trees, with here and there a spreading mulberry, a gray old medlar or gnarled rugged quince; and how lovely appeared the mossy sloping bank where Jack and I so often had sat learning our lessons or indulging in bright dreams for the future, when he was to be a great hero—a second Napoleon or Wellington, it was not decided which—and I, with no Miss Meek to control me, was to be my own mistress, take care of papa, and write to him the longest of letters. The bank was in winter or summer time our favourite resort; it was there we found the earliest violets, the sweetest

primroses, and in summer nothing could be more beautiful than its waving grass and ferns, particularly when, as at the present time, the rain had gemmed each graceful drooping leaf or blade with glistening drops that sparkled and shone like a hundred diamonds. Let me linger for a moment on the spot, as it comes before me in all its loveliness, while Jack is stuffing his pockets with as much fruit as he can gather in passing, and impress it on my mind as a dear, well-loved remembrance to look back upon in the days, the years yet to come, for little did either of us think as we closed the gate behind us and hurried up the lane, that Jack had looked for the last time on the dear old orchard, where his happy laugh and bright face would be known no more.

The lane was long and winding, and skirted the meadows; but anxious as I knew Jack was to see papa, how he seemed to loiter in it! Of course the first thing he did was to open the parcel, and begin munching first a bit of cake, then a plum or pear, or snatching bites at a very hard sour-looking apple; all of which he first offered to me, and appeared surprised at my

refusing. Then he would pause and ask with serious face, "Did I not hear someone calling Daisy?" Of course it was Miss Meek trying to overtake us. Or stopping after a long run, he would try and clamber over or push his way through the tall hedges of hawthorn, wild rose, and all things sweet that shaded the wayside; or, pulling down long graceful festoons of woodbine and honeysuckle, peep through each gap, pretending that dark object was my governess lying in ambush to bear me back in triumph; so that it was in fear and trembling we entered the village of Hinton just as the clock in the old church tower was striking seven.

Hinton, one of the quietest and dullest of English villages, consisted of a row of straggling cottages, a few small shops, and the dear old church — papa's church, with its ivied walls, quaint old tower, Norman porch, and peaceful churchyard on the slope of a hill at the furthest end.

Troops of noisy children were playing merrily about, rejoicing, no doubt, that lessons and work were over for that day at least; while old men smoking their pipes, and knots of women chat-

ting, laughing, and having a friendly gossip, stood at their cottage doors or garden gates.

Many were the inquisitive glances bestowed upon us as we passed along, for never before at so late an hour had we been seen by ourselves in the village.

"Here comes the parson's daughter," said an old dame to her neighbour. "Wot be she out for, I wonder?"

"Parson he passed an hour ago; likely she be going to meet him."

"Oh, Mrs. Weston!" I exclaimed as these remarks, uttered in the shrillest of voices, reached my ears. "We are going to meet papa; can you tell me which way he went? Did you speak to him as he went by? and was he coming home?" and I paused, not remembering another question I could put to her.

"No-a, missy, can't say as I did speak to parson," was the reply. "He be in a great hurry, that he be, and my pore old chest were that weak and bad I couldn't holler to him."

"But I seed him," cried her companion eagerly. "He stopped for a minnit just to say a word to my old man, and to ask him how his rheumatiks

were, for he's been mortial bad; and he told him, leastways parson did, he were going to Madam Warner, who was ill, and he hoped to be back again afore it were dark."

"Oh! thank you so much!" I said, hurrying on; and then with a sudden impulse, for which I could not account, I turned back.

"We are going through the wood," I said, "to meet papa; but should he come home by the road, and you see him, would you kindly tell him where we are going?"

"Yes, missy, we'll tell parson, sure enough."

"Aye, aye, my young master," cried her old husband, taking the pipe he was smoking out of his mouth and waving it in the direction of Denham Wood. "Dont'ee keep the young lady out too long. Look'ee, sir, there—over yonder. It seems all fair above and below now, but there's a storm a-brewin', and it'll come up fast enough as the sun goes down. The sky is blue enough now, I warrant, but there's dirty weather over there;" and he pointed to a ridge of dark clouds low down in the horizon.

"All right!" replied Jack cheerily. "I'll take care of Miss Daisy fast enough, and we shall be

home long before a storm comes on. Now, Daisy, hurry, there's a brick!"

And hurry we did. Up a hill, dusty and stony; through meadows that seemed all stiles, hard and high to clamber over; then into a lane overhung with blackberry and alder bushes, and sloping banks of moss and hart's-tongue fern, and lovely tall nodding foxgloves. How I longed to stop and gather them! but each passing moment was too precious to lose. Then we came to another long winding lane, and at last, breathless and rather tired, we entered Denham Woods.

"Oh, Jack," I exclaimed, as soon as I could speak, "how lovely this is! You know I have only been here once before, and that was with papa and Miss Meek at Christmas time, and then everything looked cold and dreary; of course there were plenty of holly trees full of red berries, and the dead leaves made a lovely carpet to walk upon; but I do not think woods are as beautiful in the winter as in the summer, do you?"

"I've never thought about it," was the reply, with an air of superiority, as if the comparison was beneath all notice. "But you see, Daisy,

boys don't think of all the nonsense girls do—they've more sense. When I come here it is for a paper chase or to get a good ash stick for a fishing-rod. We had such a splendid chase the last time! Scott, Martin, and I were the hares, and all the other fellows the hounds, so I ought to know the wood and the short cuts through it pretty well. I can't tell you all the false tracks we made; but we went through the village, up the lane, and then we turned off and got into a farmyard—and you should have heard the noise the ducks and the geese made—and a man there called to us: 'What are you a-doing on, frightening the cocks and hens?'—he pronounced the word ''ens'—'and just hear the geese a-quacking!' he bawled out; and Stanley then asked him, 'Were they relations of his, as he seemed so anxious about them?' And then we made for the wood, where I had marked out a lot of trees. But, Daisy, how tired you look! Let us sit down on this old tree and watch for the dad; he must come by this path. Here, sit down and have a bit of cake."

The tree was a fallen oak that lay right across the path, and glad enough was I to rest awhile,

listening to Jack, and watching the flickering shadows and lengthening sun-rays.

The sun was getting lower and lower in the sky, its warm red light brighter and deeper; it would soon sink behind the trees, and night and darkness come on; already the birds were singing their evening song, and the quiet hush of eventide stealing around.

"Go on, Jack," said I wearily, as we sat eating the cake we had brought with us and looking down the woodland path. "Tell me about the paper chase."

"Well, we went at a glorious pace through the wood, and down the road, and then we met a baker going to Chelhurst Common. Don't you know it?"

"No," I replied slowly, for I was really wondering where papa could be, and little dreaming how soon I was to make the acquaintance of the locality. "I have never been there."

"Oh, well, we gave him enough paper to put the hounds on a false track, and then we tore across to Abbey Dale, and there's a big brook there, but we didn't think of that. We jumped in, it was jolly cold, but awfully nice; and then

we scrambled through a hedge, a nasty prickly one, crossed a field or two; and I say didn't old Farmer Godley bawl out to us, 'We were trespassing, and he would set the bull loose at us.' We didn't care. It was such fun to hear the old fellow go on at us, for we knew he was too stout to run fast; and long before he could have got to the bull we had scrambled through the hedge at the other end of the meadow, and doubling across country for a mile or two. Twice we caught sight of the hounds, and once we hid ourselves in a ditch, such a muddy one, and then we watched them go by, and dodged them down by Old Man's Hollow, and got in the rear of some cottages; then we cut up a long lane, and got back to Hinton in double-quick time; but I say, Daisy, it is horrid, you are not listening a word to what a fellow is telling you, and it was such a splendid run!"

"Yes, Jack, I am listening, or at least trying to do so; but oh, Jack, I long to see papa! Do you think he will be much longer?"

"How can I tell? but I say, there's someone coming up the path now. I can see him, for it's a man, through the bushes."

"It's papa," I cried. "Come, Jack; oh how

glad I am we have met him!" And in another minute we were tearing as fast as we could down the narrow path, my dress catching in every bramble as we passed, and startling a little gray rabbit, who hurried off to his hole, and then peeped shyly at us as we hurried on.

"Papa!" I exclaimed, as I caught a glimpse of the advancing figure, and then hastily drew back on hearing it whistle loudly. "Jack, that is *not* papa!"

"I should rather think not; fancy the vicar dressed like that, and whistling, 'Polly, put the kettle on.' Why, Daisy, it's a gypsy!"

"A gypsy!" I cried in dismay, and shrinking back. "What shall we do?"

"Do! why, Daisy, do not be so stupid. Surely you are not afraid! What cowards girls are! I never saw such muffs; they haven't a bit of pluck in them. There, come along; the man will not harm you." And sticking his hands in his pockets, Jack began whistling, only in a louder key than the man slowly advancing towards us, "Polly, put the kettle on."

He was tall, dark, and, I must say, dirty looking, with his hat slouched over his face, a string

of pegs hanging over his shoulder, and leading a shaggy little pony.

Behind him came a woman, with a baby in her arms, and a little girl of about four or five years of age trotting by her side.

She was singing to the baby in such a sweet low voice, such a pretty lullaby, and hushing and soothing it in such tender tones, I could not help stopping to stare at her, wondering in my own mind could all gypsy women be so loving and gentle, for I had only pictured them as a fierce wandering race, who would steal children for the sake of their clothes, and pilfer anything they could lay their hands upon.

The woman, too, was very handsome, with a kind of beauty I had never seen before, tall, with delicate features, and large soft expressive eyes. She wore a bright scarlet handkerchief tied over her head, and knotted loosely under her chin, and her hair, escaping from under its folds, hung in thick black shining waves around her shoulders.

"Let a gypsy tell your fortune, pretty missy," she said, coming up to me and taking hold of my hand before I could prevent her; "and yours

too, my handsome young master," and she looked at Jack.

"No," I cried, snatching my hand away. "You can tell me nothing."

"Don't be frightened, my young lady; the gypsy won't harm you."

"I will not listen to you," I exclaimed. "Jack, come away;" and hardly knowing what I was doing, I pushed past her and clung to him.

"Jack," I cried, "do not listen to her."

"And why not, my pretty missy? The poor gypsy reads the stars when you are fast asleep, and that is why we tell the future."

"The future belongs to God, as well as every moment, every day of our lives. It is to him we must look for guidance, on him we must depend. Oh, Jack," I cried, taking his hand and standing before him, so as to prevent her coming nearer, "do not listen to such nonsense! Neither can this woman, nor anyone else, foretell God's purposes. Come away, dear Jack; do come!"

"Missy," and the woman came closer, "you are right, my little lady, quite right; and," she continued in a low sad voice, "the future is in

God's hands. I am but an ignorant woman, with my children to support, but I know, and feel, past, present, and the future are in his hands; and I won't, missy," she whispered softly, so that it could only reach my ear, "tell you a lot of falsehoods;" and then she continued aloud:

"We're but a poor wandering set, my lady, and obliged to pick up a living in any way we can. Through the winter's cold, or summer's heat, we're obliged to tramp it, without—ah! it's truth, my lady—a bit of bread in our lips, nor our poor children either; and missy, believe me, we don't so much care for ourselves, but it's the poor little children, to see them starving, and to hear them crying for the food we can't give them. Look here, my young lady, this, my baby, is but three months old, this little girl hardly four, and I've another at home too sick to bring out; and we've tramped it, some twenty mile, since Monday, me and my master, he selling pegs, and we've only taken a few pence this whole day, so give, miss, if you have one, a penny to the poor children. This one is hungry enough," and she pointed to the little trot holding her dress, and looking up at us with her mother's beautiful eyes, the same

regular features, black silky hair, and white even teeth. "The penny won't break you, my lady, and God will bless you for your kindness."

"But I'm afraid I haven't a penny," I answered, as I began searching my pocket, "or you should have it. Oh, here is a sixpence papa gave me!" and I fished it out from the depths of the corner where for the last week it must have lain forgotten, "and you are quite welcome to it;" and I put it into the child's hand, while she looked up shyly into my face, and then bursting into a merry laugh hid her dimpled rosy cheeks in her mother's gown."

"There, thank the pretty lady," said the woman "and make a pretty curtsey."

But the child only laughed the more, hiding her face, and then looked up again, as if playing at bo-peep with me.

"Is she not a lovely child, Jack?" I said, turning to him. "I do think she is prettier than any child in Hinton, for beyond the village I could not recollect any little one with the least pretensions to good looks."

"She's a jolly little thing," he replied, stopping his whistling to look at her, "and I daresay would

like some cake, or a plum. But I say, Daisy, here's a rum go. I had one somewhere, unless I've eaten it, and a penny. Now, where has it got to?" and he began turning the pockets of his jacket inside out, and emptying their contents into my hand.

"What rubbish you have got!" I exclaimed, as twine, marbles, a pencil well worn to the stump, a blotted sheet of a French exercise, some grains of gunpowder, and a clasp-knife with a buck-horn handle, came to view.

"I say, that's a good knife, young master," said the gypsy man, speaking for the first time. "Here, hand it over to me; it's just the one I want."

"Thanks!" said Jack coolly, opening it, and passing his finger over the sharpest and largest blade. "Then want may be your master, for I do not think, my friend, you will have it. It's the knife Tom Scott gave me, Daisy, and these are his initials on the handle."

"You won't give it, eh, my young master! but suppose *I take* it," and the man laughed a short complacent laugh, and displayed a row of white glistening teeth, gleaming sharp and distinct, as a bull-dog preparing to spring.

"But you shall not have it," said Jack quietly, but with an angry light in his blue eyes. "The knife is mine, and I am not going to part with it;" and he slipped it back into his pocket.

"Here, hand that knife over to me," said the man savagely, "or I may not keep my hands off you. Why, for two pins I'd knock you down, or do worse, perhaps."

"No, you wouldn't," said Jack, eyeing him steadily and speaking very calmly. "There, Daisy, don't look so white, or tremble like that. Leave me, dear, I'm not afraid of this fellow. Have the knife! No, that he sha'n't."

"Why shouldn't I, eh, young master?" cried the man, laying his hand upon Jack's shoulder, and looking down upon him with flashing eyes. "Why, lor, before you could speak a word I'd do for you!"

"You would not," said Jack coolly. "You would do nothing of the kind," he repeated as calmly as if dear life were not at stake. "Shall I tell you why?" and he laid his hand on the gypsy's arm, and looked at him with honest fearless eyes. "Because you're a man and a gypsy, but you are not a coward and a brute."

The man started, and eyed him in amazement, and then, falling back a few paces, stared as if his senses had deceived him.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "but you're a plucky one, a reg'lar brave, true-hearted, sperited young chap. If it wasn't for your white skin I'd say you were a Romany, not a milk-and-water faced Gorgio. And you're not afeeard of me, eh?"

"Afraid! why should I be?" said Jack with a laugh. "Do you think a big fellow like you would harm a small chap like me, or a girl like Daisy, with your wife and children looking on. No, I'm not a bit afraid."

The gypsy stepped back to have another good look at him, and a glance of ill-disguised admiration succeeded the hitherto dangerous scowl his features wore.

"I'd scorn to harm you, young master," he replied. "You're a reg'lar brick, and as plucky a youngster as I ever met, not a bit chicken-hearted nor afeeard; and as to that pretty young missy, why, I wouldn't hurt a hair of her head. She's been kind and pleasant-spoken to my wife, and gypsy or Gorgio, no harm shall come to you."

"Don't be afraid, my young lady," said the woman, turning to me with a kind nod and pleasant smile. "Dont'ee mind my husband; he's a bit short in his temper, but he wouldn't hurt a fly, and he's seemed rough-like more to see what a spirit the young gentleman had."

"And a rare plucky un," said the gypsy, with a laugh and sparkle of his dark eyes. "If he wouldn't do well for a Romany, and a fine one too!"

"What's a Romany?" asked Jack.

"A true Romany, young master, is what you Gentiles or Gorgios call a gypsy. I'm a true Romany, so is my wife."

"And a very handsome one too," said Jack, with a smile to the woman, and laying his hand on the head of the pretty little girl, who, more dimpled and rosier, was looking up into his face. "And she's a true Romany too, eh?"

"Right you are, young master! We all belong to the Lee tribe."

"But I was a Boswell!" said the woman, evidently pleased with Jack's compliment, and the notice he was taking of her child. "My father was a Boswell, my mother a Lee, and I married

into her tribe. Ah, sir! you gentlefolks may look down upon us Romanies, and think we're a poor ignorant set, but I can tell you we are as proud of our tribes as you are of your family, and we wouldn't do anything to disgrace them."

"Well, missus, come on," said the man impatiently; "we can't stay here all night, for we've got a goodish tramp yet before us. Keep your knife, young master, I don't want it; and look'ee, if ever you want a friend you just come to me."

"But where am I to find you?" asked Jack. "Because if anywhere near, when we are having a paper chase you might put the fellows on the wrong track; that would be awfully jolly, and shut them up like old boots!"

"Do you know your way through the fir wood up yonder?" said the woman. "Then, sir, take the main road to Chelhurst Common. We're encamped there, and if you come bring the young lady with you. She'd be pleased, maybe, to see a poor gypsy's tent; and ask for Solomon Lee."

"Yes, that's my name, young master," exclaimed her husband. "They all knows me

about there, and will be more civil to you if they think you're a friend of mine," and he laughed good-humouredly at the notion of he and Jack being friends.

"And my name is Richelda Lee, and very glad we shall be to see you, missy. And if you've got any old dresses to spare, or boots, or anything not too big to carry, bring it with you for the poor gypsy children," said the woman in a coaxing tone.

"I say, Daisy, wouldn't it be fun to go and see the tents? A real gypsy camp. And think how scared old Meek will be! Well, we will come perhaps to-morrow. And here, my friend, is the knife. I'll give it to you with the greatest pleasure for fair words, not for foul;" and Jack tossed it into the gypsy's hand.

"Thank'ee, young master," was the reply, as the outstretched palm closed on it. "Now we must be going, lass!" and so, with many a wave of the hand to the little girl, who with her mother turned round repeatedly to look at us, slowly they passed from our sight, the man and fat pony bringing up the rear.

"I say, Daisy, what a bit of luck meeting these

people has been! Can't they put the fellows on the wrong track, and help us in our next paper chase!"

"Oh, never mind paper chases now, Jack!" I answered. "See how dark it has grown, and I'm almost sure I heard a distant peal of thunder. Where can papa be?"

"I think we had better follow this path," he replied, "it will lead higher up into the wood; and then if we get into the road we might just meet him if we hurry by the village, for I hardly expect he will come this way now."

"Are you sure you know the way?" I asked, for the thought of plunging deeper into the loneliness of the wood, and then perhaps losing ourselves, was not a pleasant idea.

"Know the way!" he repeated contemptuously; "of course I do, every step of it. We have nothing to do but to keep this path, turn up by the bank; that will bring us into the upper wood; and there's a short cut through that will take us on to the road and into the village, and we shall get home before it is dark."

"But then, Jack, I shall not be able to speak to him, and Miss Meek will—"

"There, don't begin to worry and bother about what may not happen. Here, take my hand, the bank is slippery, and I don't want you to fall and hurt yourself."

The bank *was* slippery, and so steep I thought, not even with Jack helping me I should have reached the top, but we scrambled up somehow, and then found ourselves in the very heart of the wood.

How lonely, how quiet it was! and what an air of "unearthliness" pervaded it! How dark and dense the shadows, how pale and ghostly the flickering gleams of light that fell on the shining silver birches, grand old beeches, and gnarled rugged oaks!

"Oh, Jack!" I cried, as something skimmed past me, and flitted away into the darkness beyond, "what was that?"

"Only a bat! Surely you are not frightened at a little thing like that? There goes another; and see, there's a rabbit running before us. Poor little bunny; why, he's vanished like a hobgoblin at the sound of our voices. But, I say, Daisy, you're not afraid of being here?" and he glanced anxiously at me.

"No!" I answered slowly, and looking eagerly around, "the wood is very beautiful; but, Jack, I wish, oh! I do wish we were at home again. It is growing so late, and hark! Was not that thunder?"

"Yes! I really believe it is; but it's a very distant peal. Here, follow this path, and we shall soon get into the road."

So on and on we went, our feet sinking into the deep drifts of the last year's leaves, or treading noiselessly over a soft carpet of moss and lichen, pushing through the high many-fronded bracken or thorny furze that grew in the openings, or trampling over weed, fern, and berry, but ever, as it seemed to me, getting deeper and deeper into the wood, with lengthening shadows and darkness gathering around us.

"Was not that little girl a pretty child?" said Jack, who could not remain silent long. "And what a good-looking gypsy the mother was, but knowing enough, Daisy. She had an eye to business sharp enough. Fancy your going to the camp with a bundle of old clothes upon your back! 'Any old rags or bones, or old clo'?' 'Old clo!' How pretty to hear you crying that!

I wonder what old Meek would think of you then! And I say, Mr. Solomon was sharp and cute enough. He thought, because I was a boy, I should be afraid not to give him the knife when he asked for it. But I've always noticed, Daisy, the bigger and more blustering a fellow is, the sooner he's cowed. It's those silent fellows that are the worst foes, the most dangerous enemies. A bully is always a sneak and a coward. But oh! what a loud peal that was!"

And so it was. A long sullen roll of thunder that seemed to burst over our heads with a deafening roar, and then, in a hundred echoes, die away among the trees; while a flash of vivid lightning lit up the wood, giving ghastly shapes and forms of lurid light to the scene around.

But more terrible to me than storm and tempest was to hear, above the rustling and pattering of the rain that in large drops now began to fall, and the wild ceaseless moaning of the wind as it came rushing through the branches, Jack's almost breathless voice:

"Daisy, can you forgive me? I've taken the wrong path! And we've—" (this was said with a gasp)—"we've lost our way!"

For a moment I stood dumfounded. My heart seemed to stop beating, and a big lump came into my throat.

"I don't mind a bit for myself," came again the sorrowful pleading voice; "but it's for you, and the dear old dad! Oh, Daisy, what will he say?" and as the last words died away in a sob, by the lightning's flash I could see his white face, and big tears glistening in his eyes.

The sight of Jack weeping gave me strength, and made me rouse myself from the numbing sense of fear that was creeping over me, and making me feel faint and dizzy.

I knew he thought more of my safety than his own—he was too unselfish and courageous a boy to think ever of himself; but he knew how papa would feel, and how frightened I must be, and it was with a happy feeling at my heart that my dear and only playfellow should be sorry for me, and that much as he despised "boys crying," he could shed tears for papa's sake and my safety.

I laid my hand upon his shoulder, and said encouragingly:

"Dear old Jack! Please don't fret. God will

take care of us; and we are just as safe here under his care as if we were at home."

But there was a catch in my voice as I pronounced the word "home!" Ah! should we ever see it again?

A vision rose before me of the pleasant sitting-room at the Vicarage, with its low-pitched ceiling, oak-panelled walls, the heavy crimson curtains drawn, and the pretty dainty tea-service on the queer little quaintly-carved table. I could see papa, tired from his walk, lying back in his easy-chair, too absorbed in his book or newspaper to notice anybody or anything, and of course thinking we were in the school-room, asking no questions as to our whereabouts. And with this remembrance of home, that never before had seemed so dear, so precious to me, came a sickening but certain conviction. Papa, foreseeing the storm, had not passed through the wood, and the cottagers, closing their doors and shutters early for the night, had not noticed his passing by, and the old people to whom we had spoken, concluding we had returned home long ago, were asleep in their beds, not giving a thought to us, or having an idea of where we were.

So to stay where we were for the night seemed not only possible, but too probable; and all that was to be done was to find some place of shelter.

"But we cannot remain here, Jack!" said I as cheerily as I could. "You know how dangerous we have always heard it is to be under trees in a storm; and besides, we shall soon be drenched with this heavy rain. Can we not crouch down among those furze bushes where the bracken grows so tall and thick?"

And here let me remark it was with a feeling of relief I noticed Jack did not laugh at my suggestion, but, on the contrary, seemed to trust to my guidance.

"Yes, Daisy, you're right! And see here, the ferns grow so thick the ground is not a bit wet."

And so we crouched down, an old bush behind us, and the wide fronds of the bracken bending over us as a protection from the rain and wind.

Jack would have taken off his coat to have wrapped me in it, protesting he did not want it, but I would not let him do so, and said almost

laughingly, so anxious was I to cheer and comfort him:

"Now, Jack, how can you be so foolish? If I take it what would become of you? And if anything happened to you what would become of *me?* And then what would papa say?"

"Oh, Daisy! Daisy!" he burst out. "What a wicked, cruel, selfish fellow I've been to bring all this upon you! I've laughed and teased you and thought girls had no sense, and boys were so superior, and all that rubbish; and now when the time comes to prove it I find myself looking to you, Daisy, and depending upon your good sense and courage. Daisy, dear, you are worth a dozen of me."

"Oh! please don't talk like that, Jack!" I cried, for I could not bear to hear such undeserved praise.

"But I do. It's been all my conceit and obstinacy. 'Pigheadedness,' Daisy, that is the right name for it. I thought I knew the path when I did not; and see what trouble I have brought you into. I cannot bear to think of it."

Then suddenly clasping his hands I could hear his voice above the storm:

"Dear Jesus! have mercy. Save her. It's all my fault. Punish me, but spare Daisy!"

"You must not blame yourself, Jack!" I cried. "Had I been obedient, written my exercise, and obeyed Miss Meek, none of this trouble would have happened. But, dear Jack, do not give way. God can watch over us here. He knows, too, how little I thought of all my disobedience would bring upon us. Oh, Jack, let us pray to him! He will hear us, and in his mercy send us help in some way. Let us ask him, and trust to his goodness!" And clasping his hand in mine we knelt together and prayed earnestly.

"And do you know, Daisy," said Jack after a few minutes' silence, "I do believe our prayers have been heard. See! the rain is much less, the lightning is not so vivid, and the thunder seems passing over that way; and now the best thing I can do is to climb up a tree—this is a jolly tall one—and see how far we are from the road and in what direction it lies, and then we may try and get home. The dear old dad will forgive us, I know, when we tell him what a fright we have had and our reason for coming so far; and

of course I shall tell him how much I've been in fault. But I am sure he will not be angry—and if he is, I am only to blame for bringing all this trouble upon you, and all through my stupid pigheadedness."

"Oh, stop, Jack!" I cried imploringly; "I have been to blame just as much—you know I have."

"Well, there, we won't argue any more about it. Now, is not this a splendid tree? Here, up I go!"

And, nimble as a squirrel, he clambered up, and, springing from branch to branch, had soon gained the highest.

"I must wait a minute until it lightens," he shouted down to me, "before I can see the road or find out where it runs. Oh, there it is! Why, Daisy"—and he gave a happy laugh—"it runs straight along to the right; and we are positively only a few yards from it. We haven't been in the thickest part of the wood, after all; we came out all right by the short cut. Hurrah! we'll soon be—"

A crash of a branch breaking, a wild cry, and by the lightning's flash I saw the bough had

given way; and Jack, scattering the leaves and twigs in all directions, fell with a thud to the ground.

In a moment I was dazed—too horror-struck to move; then rushing forward I bent over the prostrate form.

"Jack, Jack!" I cried, "speak to me, tell me are you hurt?"

But there was no sound nor motion, and the hand I would have clasped in mine fell heavily to the ground.

It was too awful to realize. Was Jack, my faithful friend and companion, the dear, happy playfellow, who had brought such sunshine to our home, to be taken from us?

Once more I bent over Jack, laying my hand upon his heart. To my unspeakable joy I felt it feebly beating, and at the same time with a faint moan he moved.

"With God's mercy I'll save you yet, Jack!" I cried; then taking off my jacket I covered it over him, and ran off as fast as I could in the direction of the road that he had told me skirted the wood.

I cannot tell which way I went or how I went;

all I could think of was, the gypsies were somewhere on Chelhurst Common, and that once out of the wood it lay straight before me. So on I ran, never turning to the right nor the left, but seeming instinctively to be taking the right path.

I recollect the rain pouring down thick and fast, and of thinking of Jack being out in it, and wondering whether he would take cold lying there on the wet grass; of my dress catching every now and then in a furze or holly bush, and, in freeing myself, of leaving great pieces fluttering behind; of losing my shoe in some mossy pitfall or sodden grass; of the spreading trees overhead; of a dismal owl hooting in the distance. But how long or how quickly I kept on my way I know not.

But I can also remember the storm ceasing, the rain falling less, and the thunder dying away, and then of watching a pale young moon rising in the murky sky, just as I passed out of the wood, crossed the road, and was speeding along the lonely common that lay stretched before me. On, on I went, my heart lifted up in silent prayer, and with tearful, aching eyes

eagerly scanning the wide, pathless waste that seemed to have no end.

If I could but see the slightest glimmer of a light, I thought, I should then know where the camp was; but, alas! all was darkness, not the faintest spark to be seen; and I was just wondering how much farther I should have to go, and how much longer Jack was to lie there alone and helpless, when suddenly my foot caught in something—what I could not tell—and I stumbled and fell, twisting my ankle as I did so. For a moment the pain prevented my rising, but in endeavouring to scramble to my feet again I saw, far away it seemed, the light and smoke of a fire.

"Oh, thank God! thank God!" I cried as happy tears gathered to my eyes, for something seemed to tell me that the help so sorely needed was at hand; and hurrying on, forgetful of the increasing painfulness and swelling of my foot, in a few moments I was near enough to glance around.

It was the gypsies' encampment, for there were several tents consisting of wooden hoops covered with ragged old blankets; a fire was burning in the centre, and a huge kettle, from which wreaths of smoke and a most savoury odour were escap-

ing, was suspended over it. A girl of about my own age had lifted the lid and was peering into its contents.

Several other figures were grouped around, but I did not look at them; all I wanted was Richelda, and I soon espied her sitting apart from the rest, her baby in her arms, and crooning in the same soft, sweet voice the lullaby that I had heard only so short a time before in the wood.

"Oh, Richelda," I cried as I sprang towards her, "save Jack!"

I could hear a confused murmur of voices and see figures moving to and fro, but my arms were around her neck, my face raised appealingly to hers.

"Why, it's the young lady, the little missy!" sounded in my ears.

"Yes; but save Jack!" I whispered again; for sense and voice and strength seemed leaving me.

"Tell me, my dear," and she drew me tenderly to her, "where is the young gentleman?"

"Under a tree—in—the—wood!" I gasped. "He fell!—save Jack!"

Then I remembered no more, and for many a weary day and night life was a blank to me.

When I recovered consciousness I found myself in my little bed and in my own room at home, with dear Auntie May's face bent over me.

"Why, auntie!" I exclaimed, looking at her in astonishment, but yet feeling too tired to express my surprise; "have I been ill?—where's Jack?"

"Now, you must not talk, darling," she replied with a fond kiss. "Drink this and then go to sleep;" and raising me up a little she held the glass to my lips. I thought it was very cool and nice, but somehow it made me too sleepy to speak, and I knew that my head and limbs ached strangely, so turning round on the pillow I fell asleep.

When I awoke again the warm sun was streaming in at the window, and papa was beside me.

"Oh, papa! dear papa!" I said, and flung my arms around his neck. "How kind and good of you to come and see me! Have I been dreaming? for I thought auntie was here a little while ago."

"Yes, my child," was the reply, "your Auntie May is here. Ah! here she comes. How pleased she will be to see you so much better."

"Have I been so very ill?" I asked. "And tell me, please, where is Jack?"

I saw them exchange glances; then auntie came beside me.

"Can you remember, Daisy dear, when last you saw him?"

"Yes," I answered, as the memory of that terrible night came back slowly to me. "I recollect well. Tell me of him."

And then by degrees, for I was too weak to hear all at the first or to have too much excitement, I was told all that had occurred since that time.

Papa had remained at Mrs. Warner's until the storm abated, and then had returned home in her carriage.

Mary was the first to see him and to tell him that we were missing, and all that had happened in the afternoon, and our motive for hurrying to meet him.

And here I may mention that papa did not see Miss Meek again, for at his request she left the Vicarage the next day.

The news soon spread throughout the village that "parson's young folk had lost their way,

and were out in the storm," and parties of men volunteered at once to search the woods and surrounding neighbourhood. Old Gaffer Weston, the kind-hearted old man who had warned Jack "that a storm was brewing," feeling uneasy as to our safety, made his way quickly to the Vicarage, and was the first to tell by which way we went, a clue that I need not say was quickly followed up, and we were soon found, for at that moment we were both of us in Richelda's tent on Chelhurst Common, carefully watched and tended by her—her husband having set off at once on hearing my few disjointed words, to seek for Jack; and in his strong arms had borne him safely from the spot where he was lying in Hinton Woods; and had then hurried to the Vicarage to apprise papa of our safety.

It appeared almost a miracle that I could have found my way to the gypsies' camp—"straight as a crow could fly," as Richelda afterwards informed papa—with my dress torn in shreds, my face and hands scratched by brambles, and soaked by the rain to the skin; yet, with God's blessing, I had done so, and when I had spoken of Jack and the danger he was in I sank sense-

less in her arms; and by the morning, when he was conveyed home, I was in a high fever and delirious.

As to Jack, Lee and others of the tribe started in search of him; and, guided by the torn shreds of my dress hanging on the bushes and my foot-marks in the soft mossy turf, soon found him. But I cannot do better than give you papa's words.

"Daisy, darling! it is better, as you are now stronger, that you should know all. Jack did not even take a cold from his exposure to the storm, and when Lee conveyed him to the shelter of his tent he soon recovered consciousness, and was able to tell the gypsies where you both lived; but in falling, my child, from the tree, he injured his spine, and not being satisfied with the medical treatment he received here, I thought it wiser to take him to London, and there place him under the care of a very clever physician, with whom he is to remain until, with God's blessing, he grows better and stronger; and then, my dear, but not until then, will you be allowed to see him." But papa did not tell me, nor did I know it for some time afterwards, that Jack, bright

happy Jack, in the injury to his spine, might be a cripple for life.

Summer had gone, its glory departed, and October's brown and faded leaves were whirling thick and fast in the air, when I was considered strong enough to leave home, and bear the fatigue of the journey to London.

Jack had written several letters to me, and I could see by the trembling, indistinct writing that he was ill; but I was not prepared when I saw him for the change, the shadow of all that was once bright and winsome that met my gaze.

So pale, thin, hollow eyed and cheeked, could this be laughing blue-eyed Jack? Ah! how bitterly I thought of my one great act of disobedience, and the sorrow it had brought with it; how I reproached myself as I looked at the white face before me. But Jack soon roused himself, and appeared so glad to see me that the nurse in attendance declared that "my coming did him good."

"Why, Daisy," he said, as he held my hand in his, "how funny you look with all your hair cut short; of course it is very becoming," and he

gave the ghost of his merry laugh. "I like those queer little curls; and I say, Daisy"—and a faint colour flushed his pale cheeks—"what a plucky girl you are! You saved my life!"

"Oh, Jack, dear, please don't talk of it," I replied, my eyes filling with tears as I looked at the altered face before me. "Please let us speak of something else?"

"No, Daisy, I cannot do that, I must tell you something. Do you remember what I told you in the wood when we were under the bracken?"

"Hush!" I exclaimed. "Jack, dear, do not think of it."

"But I must tell you, Daisy," and he held my hand gently within his own.

"What an obstinate, conceited idiot I was, Daisy, looking down upon every one I did not consider to be as clever as myself! but, believe me, a bed of sickness teaches us many a lesson. It proves how vain, how foolish it is to trust to human strength; and it tells us also, Daisy, of God's infinite mercy, His love, His tender pity and forbearance for us. I have thought much of all these things since I have been lying here."

"Oh, Jack," I sobbed, "I am so unhappy, I

shall never forgive myself! Had I only been obedient and written that French exercise and practised my scales, as Miss Meek told me to do, none of this dreadful sorrow would have happened."

"Stop, Daisy," and Jack turned to me with the kind frank look of old, "don't talk like that, dear; you must not blame yourself; I cannot bear it. God orders all for the best. His ways are not our ways, and had it not been for this illness"—and he gave a patient loving smile—"I might never have sought him nor found him. Truly, I may say, 'He hath done all things well.' Sometimes I think I shall never get better, but my life is in his hands, and he knows best."

But with God's blessing Jack did recover. It was a long wearisome illness, but he improved so much in health that at the end of another year he was able to go to Germany and drink the waters of some celebrated place with an unpronounceable name, and to learn the language, and returned to England qualified to pass his exam for Sandhurst, and so get his commission, and become as gallant, as smart a soldier as there was in her Majesty's service.

As to myself, I went to Scotland with dear Auntie May, and remained for some time with her. Papa was soon afterwards offered and accepted another living, as when I was seventeen I was considered old enough to be his housekeeper, and to take care of him. We had the happiest of houses, and there I stayed until I married; and so, children, ends my story.

"But, mama, dear," said Mob, stealing to her mother's chair and gently stroking the still, smooth cheek, "you have not finished it up nicely, not told us half enough of what became of all and everybody—you know what I mean."

"Ah, yes, mother!" and Mrs. Vivian smiled at the chorus of shrill inquiring voices and eager looks around. "The gypsies! what became of the gypsies?"

"And that good kind woman and her pretty child?"

"Richelda!" said Alice. "Oh, Auntie, what a pretty name, it is so novel I shall call my little kitten Richelda!"

"They were not forgotten, my dears," replied Mrs. Vivian. "For some years they came to

Hinton every summer, and when papa was there he offered them a pretty cottage rent free, just beyond the village, if they would like to live in it, but, as Richelda said, 'They could not breathe unless they were in the open air. All their lives they had been accustomed to an out-door life, and could not understand being shut up in four walls.' So papa bought them a dear little pony, and assisted them in many ways; but as all this happened some years ago, and theirs is such a wandering life, I have lost sight of them, and indeed, I may say, since your dear grandfather's death, have had no tidings of them."

"But, mama, you never told us Jack's other name, I mean his real one," said Queenie.

"No, mother, you have forgotten to tell us!" exclaimed Guy. "But what a fine fellow he must have been now! I should like to have known him. It is not every fellow, mater dear, who would own to being in the wrong, and drop being conceited and stuck-up. At first I thought he was a regular prig, and lorded it a bit over you; you know what I mean—made you feel that you were not so clever as he was; but I am glad he turned out a right good fellow."

"You want to know his name, Guy?"

"Of course I do."

Mrs. Vivian smiled as she caught sight of a tall handsome man, still in the prime of life, who was crossing the lawn and approaching to where she was sitting.

"Here comes papa!" and Bertie ran off to meet him.

Colonel Vivian, with the boy's hand clasped in his, bent tenderly over his wife's chair, and with a happy smile gazed at the group around him.

"What is your name, my boy?" asked Mrs. Vivian, as Guy eagerly awaited an answer to his question, and with the manuscript in his hand moved towards his father.

"Why, Guy, mother. What a strange thing to ask me! But, mater dear. No, no, it cannot be! I know the pater's name is Guy Vivian, but surely"—and the boy looked in perplexity from one to another—"he cannot be Jack."

"Yes, my boy, Jack's name was and is Guy Vivian, your father, my children, and my own dear husband."

"Oh, what stupids we must have been," cried Mob gaily as she arranged Mrs. Vivian's cushions

and lovingly kissed her fair face, "not to have known all along that mama's Jack was our own darling papa! Really I think now I like the name of Jack better than Guy."

"So do I!" echoed a chorus of happy voices "We shall always remember papa as Jack."

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